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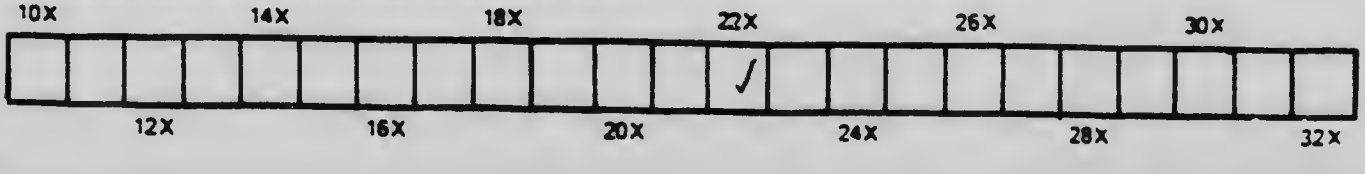

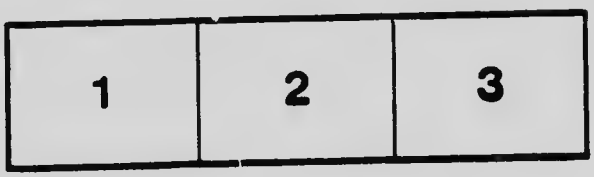

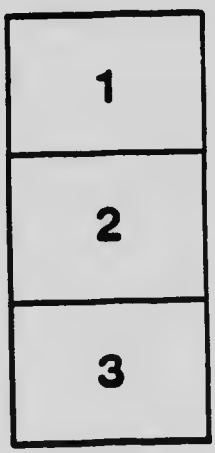

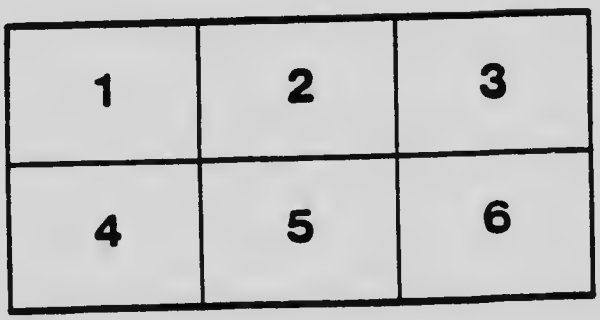

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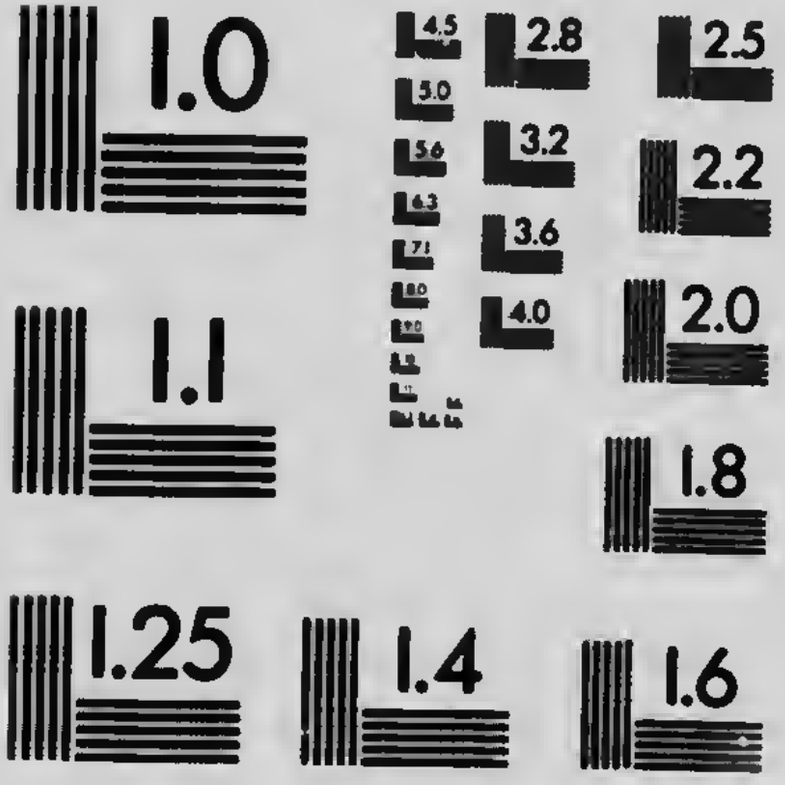

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THE ~~UNION OF~~ TWO GREAT PEOPLES

A Speech by W. H. PAGE, LL.D.

American Ambassador to England

Delivered at PLYMOUTH, August 4th, 1917

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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THE UNION OF TWO GREAT PEOPLES.

I CANNOT tell you how deeply you move me by your generous English and warm-hearted Devon welcome. I know that in spite of your good will to me your welcome far transcends any mere personal compliment. What you are here for and the reason you show me this marked honour is that I am the representative of your kinsmen across the sea. (Cheers.)

It gives me supreme pleasure to stand in this historic spot facing the statue of your great admiral, Sir Francis Drake—I will say "our" great admiral (hear, hear)—and near the place where the *Mayflower* last left land, and to see you who are of the same race of people, kindred to them, I dare say, who sailed away to carry your ideas of freedom into the New World. We bring back that same idea of freedom for the relief of the imperilled freedom of the world. (Cheers.)

I shall never forget that it is on this historic spot that His Majesty's forces by sea and land do me the honour to place themselves in beautiful line, and they do my country thereby the honour to express our kinship in blood and in the high purpose of the task that now engages us. The *Mayflower* sailed from here nearly three hundred years ago with its precious freight. There have come back American warships, no doubt with the descendants of those same men, and on the soil of our gallant Allay across the Channel there are already landed American troops to join yours. (Cheers.)

The great Republic that I have the honour to represent has, in the Providence of God, been prosperous. The

fruits of our prosperity now flow into the war coffers of every Ally, and most welcomely. Our army, our navy, our air service, and our treasur are yours for this common purpose, and we are one with you not only in this common purpose, but in all high purposes that free Governments may have. No American can feel otherwise but at home anywhere in England, but particularly in this great historic place, and under these conditions in these historic times I assure you I feel, and all the great people I represent would feel likewise if they could have the pleasure of being here, absolutely one of you. (Cheers.)

I am glad to stand here and, at the beginning of this new era in the life of our race, to pledge the unwavering fellowship of free men across the sea—that sea that once separated us but now unites us. (Cheers.) I pay homage here to the immortal memory of your great masters of the sea, and especially of those sturdy heroes and spiritual adventurers who sailed from this harbour nearly three hundred years ago and carried to the making of our New World that love of freedom which now impels us to come to the defence of the imperilled freedom of the Old World. (Cheers.)

The idealism of the Republic rests on their unconquerable spirit, which spirit we keep yet, thank God, when a high duty calls us. In memory of them and in the comradeship of this righteous war, whose awful shadow will darken the world till we win, I greet you as kinsmen and companions. We meet on the most tragic anniversary in history. It is not a day to celebrate for its own sake. What we shall be glad to celebrate will be the day of victory and its anniversary for ever after. (Cheers.)

TO FINISH THIS TASK.

But before we achieve victory it is fit that we meet on this dire anniversary to fortify our purpose, if it needs fortifying, to pledge ourselves that the brave men who have

died shall not have died in vain and to reassert our purpose to finish this task even if it exhaust the vast resources and take all the valiant lives of the Allies in Europe and of the Republic across the seas. (Cheers.) For what would the future of the human race be worth if the deliberate and calculated barbarism of our enemies overran the world? The supreme gift of free government which this brave island gave to the earth, and to which all free lands chiefly owe their freedom, would be swept away. We do not need to review these terrible three years. Everyone of us is constantly doing that whether we would or not. For the war has shut most preceding experiences and memories of normal and joyful tasks out of our memories, but there are several facts that we may profitably recall.

The chief fact is that the war was thrust upon us. Not only did the Allied countries not begin it; they did everything to prevent it. Documentary proof of this is abundant and has so often and clearly been stated that I shall not weary you with another recital of it. Another fact is the persistent denial by German public men and soldiers that the war was of their making. That is important not only as a measure of their moral accuracy, but as an indication of their method of defeat. They will appeal to the pity of the world they set out to subdue. (Cheers.) It is particularly proper for us on this tragic anniversary to ponder on these large facts while we strengthen our resolve. After the war is ended we can look back calmly on these years they will imagine, stand out in our memory as a horrible nightmare in certain moods, and in certain other moods as a time of the heroic cleansing of the earth of an ancient and deadly malady. (Cheers.) Military despotisms have ever been one of the greatest evils of human society; and we have now learnt that under modern physical progress they are become far more dangerous as well as far more loathsome than in simpler times.

THE BEST BY-PRODUCT OF WAR.

But, after these general reflections on the nature of this great conflict, I think it will be proper to speak in this place of sacred historic associations of one great by-product of the war—the best of it—I mean the closer coming together of the two great English-speaking parts of the world. (Loud cheers.) No American can come to Plymouth without thinking of the going of the English from these shores to the new land where they set up a new freedom and laid the foundations of a most prosperous and hopeful community on the earth.

In the course of time these new communities fell apart from political allegiance to the old land, but they fell apart only in political allegiance. If we had need to discuss this political divergence I should then maintain that that political separation was just as well for you as it was necessary for us—that by reason of it human freedom has been further advanced and a new chapter in free men's growth opened throughout the English-speaking world. (Cheers.)

The American Revolution was a civil war fought on each side by men of the same race. And this civil war was fought in the colonial assemblies and in your Parliament as well as on the battlefields in America, and it was won in the colonial assemblies and in your Parliament as well as on the battlefields of America, for from that day on you have regarded colonies as free and equal communities to the mother country, and you have had the happiness to see them giving of their best for their help. (Cheers.)

Now this civil war naturally left a trail of distrust, the greater because of the long distance between us by sail. But when the first steamship came over the ocean, and still more when the cable bound us together, a new union began to come about, because these eliminations of distance set the tide of feeling in the natural course laid out by kinship and common aims.

THE TESTING OF THE REPUBLIC.

But in the meantime the American community had developed in its own way, and our life had become more and more different from life in this kingdom. We became so fixed and so different in our conventions and ways of life that we could not easily come back to your conventions of life if we would. In fact there is no other test that the British people have had—no test that any people has ever had—which proved its great qualities so well as the British settlement and management of America. Here were men in a new land, cut off from close contact with their kinsmen at home, who took their political affairs in their own management, and there for were without guidance or support from their more numerous community left behind. How did the race stand such a test? No other migrating race has stood such a test so well, and those first English colonists have now grown, by natural increase and by numerous adoptions, into a people who to-day include more English-speaking white men than the whole British Empire.

They have not only outgrown in numbers all the British elsewhere, but they have kept what may be called the faith of the race. They have kept the racial and national characteristics. They have kept British law, British freedom, British Parliaments, British character, and they are reared on English literature. I am not boasting of my own land, I am only reciting how your race has endured and survived separation from you and your land. Our foundations were British, our political structure is British with variations, our social structure is British, also with important variations; more important still, our standards of character and of honour and of duty are your standards, and life and freedom have the same meaning to us that they have to you.

These are the essential things, and in these we have always been one. Our admixture of races to make a richer American stock is similar to the admixture of race that went, in an earlier time, to the making of a richer British stock in these islands. In most of our steps forward in human advancement we have but repeated in a larger land and under new conditions the steps that you took in these islands in the struggling days of the making of our race and in the beginnings of its institutions. During the long period of sailing craft and before the telegraph we lost no racial characteristics. We lost only close personal contact. We lost personal acquaintance. We even had sharp differences of opinion, which, in fact, is a quality of our race. (Laughter and cheers.)

But if you review our history carefully you will discover that no difference that ever arose between us was ever half so important as it got credit for being at the time. Most of them were superficial differences. Such as were more serious found settlement—once again by war and many times by thorough study that led to understanding. And when they were settled they were settled. That has always been our way with one another, and it will always be. We were, under the influence of swift communication and travel, already losing our long isolation, and you were relaxing your misjudgments, when our Civil War again proved we were made of the same stuff that you were made of, and we swung into a period of even closer understanding.

THE HEROIC MOOD.

And now the day of our supreme test and of the heroic mood is come. There is now a race reason why we should have a complete understanding, and such a complete understanding has come. I hope you will pardon me for alluding to these old differences, for they are now long-forgotten

far-off things. I allude to them only to clear the way, for it is not the going of the Pilgrims nor the falling away of the colonies that we are met to celebrate to-night, but rather the coming of American warships which symbolises our new union. (Cheers.) Politically two peoples, in all high aims and in the love of freedom we are one and must remain one for ever. Not only have our warships come, but our troopships have landed an army on the soil of our brave Ally across the Channel, where the enemy yet keeps the wavering line of an invader. And more warships will come and more troopships—million-laden if you need them—till that line is for ever driven back, until the submarines are withdrawn or for ever submerged. (Cheers)

There is coming the greatest victory for free government that was ever won, and the day of this victory which we are both fighting for may turn out the most important date in history. The necessity to win it has cleared the air as no other event in modern times has done, and but for the millions of brave lives it has cost this clearing of the air would richly repay all the treasure the war has cost. For it has revealed the future of the world to us, not as its conquerors, but as its necessary preservers of peace.

GUARDIANS OF CIVILISATION.

Free peace-loving nations will have no more of this colossal armed and ordered pillage, and no combination of peace-loving nations can be made effective without both branches of our race. This Empire and the great Republic must then be the main guardians of civilisation in the future—the conscious and leagued guardians of the world. (Cheers.)

It is this that the war is revealing to us. It is not a task of our seeking; but it is a task that we will, with other free peoples of the earth, under God, gladly undertake.

To undertake it our comradeship must be perpetual, and our task is to see to it that it be not broken nor even strained. That is our task and our children's task, and their children's task after them, for we are laying new foundations of human freedom. (Cheers.) Of course it is the function of Governments to keep friendly nations in proper relations to one another, and both our nations fortunately can and do trust both our Governments to do that. Through all the difficulties and differences that arose between our two Governments during the early stages of the war there was no rupture of friendly dealing. When the full story of these years of delicate relations comes to be told it will be seen that mutual toleration and forbearance played a far larger part than a rigid insistence on disputed points. Such differences as we had were differences between friends. I am sure I may say without impropriety that the two distinguished British statesmen who were His Majesty's Chief Foreign Secretaries during this period showed a spirit in their dealings with the United States Government that put the whole English-speaking world in their debt. (Cheers.) I am equally sure that they would say the same thing for the Government of the United States.

While fortunately our two Governments may be fully trusted to bind us together in every possible way, Governments come and Governments go. In free countries they are as a rule short-lived; and they are always and properly, even in the conduct of foreign relations, the servants of public opinion if public opinion strongly asserts itself. Far more important, then, than any particular Government is the temper and action of public opinion in every country such as ours, and permanent union in our large aims of our two nations, generation after generation, for ever, must therefore rest on the broad basis of a friendly and informed public opinion in both countries. If this argument be sound it leads every one of us to a high duty. The lasting

friendship of two democratic countries must rest on the sympathetic knowledge that the people of each country have of the other, even upon the personal friendship of large numbers of people one with another.

Personal friendships make for a friendly public opinion. It is therefore the highest political duty of British citizens and American citizens to build up political friendship by personal knowledge and personal friendship. It is your duty to learn all you can about the United States, about the country, about its people, their institutions, their occupations, their aims, and to make acquaintance with as many Americans as you can. It may be you will not like them all. (Laughter.) It may be you don't like all your own countrymen. (Renewed laughter.) But you will, I think, like most Americans. (Cheers.) Certainly most of them like you. (Cheers.) Most of all, make an opportunity to come and see them and see their country, and get a sympathetic knowledge of their methods and ways of life. Make a proper appraisal of their character and aims.

And of course this action must be mutual. In normal times many thousands of Americans do pay visits to your kingdom. They make pilgrimages. They come for pleasure and instruction. As soon as the war ends they will come again in still greater numbers. But in spite of visits, either way or both ways, of large numbers of individuals, each people has a vast deal of ignorance about the other. This very day I saw a statuette of Benjamin Franklin labelled George Washington. (Laughter.) It is a priceless treasure that I shall take away from Plymouth. (Renewed laughter.) Few merely private visitors get beneath the superficial conventions. By deliberately going about the task we may get far more thoroughly acquainted than we can get by the mere interchange of personal visits.

A SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOOK.

I venture to put together a few definite suggestions. Put in your schools an elementary book about the United States—not a dull text-book, but a book written by a sympathetic man of accurate knowledge, which shall tell every child in Britain about the country, about the people, how they work, how they live, what results they achieve, what they aim at; about the United States Government, about our greatest men, about our social structure—a book that shall make the large facts plain to any child, and require that every child shall read it.

A perfunctory book will fail. Have a hundred books written if necessary till the right one is written. There is, as you know, one great book written by an Englishman about the United States — Lord Bryce's "American Commonwealth." I wish it were read by as many persons here as in America. But that is not a book for children; there ought to be a more elementary book. You have often criticised certain old text-books of American history on which American children were supposed to be brought up—I was brought up on them, and I was never brought up to hate the English. (Cheers.) You have properly criticised them for laying undue emphasis on our war of revolution and on the conflicts our forefathers had with your forefathers. Now prepare a proper book for your own children, correct any disproportions these old American school books may have had, and give the chief emphasis not to our old differences, but to our present likenesses, and to our necessary close understanding for the future. (Cheers.)

On the American side the disproportion and the wrong temper of these old books that have been so much criticised are fast disappearing. Newer text-books have corrected this old fault. On the American side I want to see a modern elementary book about Great Britain put into our schools

that shall tell children of the present Great Britain, and point in the right spirit to the future. If we rear our children to understand the friendly similarities of our two peoples instead of lodging old differences in their minds we may lie down and die at ease and entrust to them the future not only of our two lands, but of the whole world as well. (Cheers.)

LECTURES. THE CINEMA. THE PRESS.

Another suggestion I make is to encourage the giving of popular lectures by well-informed Americans about our country and our people. If you show that you wish to hear them they will come. There is at this moment a considerable number of well-informed countrymen of yours lecturing in the United States on some phase of British life and activity. I think they labour under the delusion that they need to wake us up. (Laughter.) No matter, we are glad to hear them. And a large and well-informed group of my countrymen are in this kingdom lecturing on phases of American life, perhaps also under the delusion that they need to wake you up. (Laughter.) I heartily hope that this popular form of instruction will continue and grow long after the war.

It is a commonplace to say there is no other land so full of pleasant and useful information for Americans as your land and no people so well worth our intimate acquaintance as your people, and it is equally true that no other land and no other people are so well worth your sympathetic study as the United States and those that dwell there, for they have the spirit of the modern world as no others have it. I hope you will pardon me if I say that a visit to America and to your great colonies is an excursion into the future of human society.

We ought, too, to welcome and encourage all sorts of popular instruction, even moving pictures, if they show the

right pictures. Another useful piece of the machinery of popular education—perhaps the most useful of all—is the Press. Many of the most energetic editors of each country, of course, frequently visited the other, but if visits of groups of them were arranged and definite programmes were made for them to touch the real spirit of the other country, better results would follow than casual visits. Then if either country or Government seems to do anything contrary to a proper understanding with the other, if then instead of making judgments—newspaper judgments—at a distance, a group of journalists who control the chief organs of opinion in each country would themselves visit the other country and make personal first-hand investigations of what had gone wrong, many of our mistakes would be corrected instantly, and wellnigh all our misunderstandings would disappear before they arise. This is the thing to do first to achieve right understanding, and then it will be hard for a wrong understanding to arise. (Cheers.)

I believe in the suggestion also that has been made of regular personal correspondence between persons in each country. In spite of the newspapers, accurate and full information about what each country is doing to prosecute the war is difficult to procure in the other country. I know several gentlemen who got their best measure of opinion of what goes on in the United States from American correspondents. In addition to welcome information that can thus be conveyed, there will be many cases of personal friendship formed. That is the best bond of continuous amity between nations. I think that much pleasure and instruction would come of such personal correspondence. Try it. (Cheers.) I might make many such practical suggestions. Among them I should certainly include the encouragement of British students to go to American universities, where they will be most heartily welcomed, and of more American students to British universities. I

should include pilgrimages both ways of them, as well as of large bodies of educational workers.

You will say that all these things cost money. They are less costly than ignorance. If our two peoples are to come together, as we hope, travel must become much cheaper than it has ever been. And, most important of all, I would suggest frequent visits by our public men, especially those who hold high office. I need cite only the recent historic visit of Mr. Balfour to the United States and his historic reception there. (Cheers.) I doubt if a visit by any member of the Government of any people since Governments began has had so great an effect as that.

TOWN "ADOPTIONS."

Now, none of these suggestions may prove practicable to you, and whether any suggestion be practical for any particular person or community can be tested only by trial. But some plan is practical here in Plymouth, and about this your judgment is better than mine. My plea is that the people of every British community and the people of every American community shall find a way to inform themselves about the other country, and all such information brings with it a closer sympathy. The sympathetic understanding between any two free countries depends on the number of citizens in each country who themselves have a sympathetic understanding with one another. One plan is that one town in each country should "adopt" a town of the same name in the other country. If you did that you would start with about fifty Plymouths. (Laughter.) And then Great Britain and the United States, who understand one another far better than any other two great countries in the world, would come much closer together if in every community in each country there were a group of men who made the furthering of such an understanding their particular business. There is no other task so

important for the security of civilisation. I venture to say that it is our duty thus to lay broad and deep the basis of an everlasting unity.

OUR FELLOWSHIP IN WAR.

Most valuable of all the activities that lead to a permanent sympathy is our present fellowship in war. Americans now here confer daily with most Departments of your Government, and your corresponding representatives in the United States confer with most Departments of the American Government, so that the greatest possible unity of action may be secured. Our highest naval and military officers are in command of our forces in your waters and on the soil of France. (Cheers.) Our fleets in your seas are constantly becoming larger and our advanced army in France secures constant additions. The most skilful American surgeons attend the Allied wounded of all armies, and American nurses in ever-increasing numbers assist them. American engineers and labourers are laying railways behind the British and French lines. American scientific men are giving their skill not only at home but at the front to perfect scientific methods of making military activities more accurate. American lumbermen are felling your forests and cutting the trees for war uses. Labourers under American engineers are building and rebuilding military roads in France, and our money is pouring into the war coffers of all the Allies. (Cheers.)

Most of all American fighting units, naval and army and air service, are come and very many more will come. They will all work side by side with your men and the other Allies. Most of them, of course, are young men, and, like your young men, the flower of our race. These are forming companionships that nothing can sever. (Cheers.) Men who go forth to die together, if fate so wills it, understand one another as long as they survive.

Beside the companionship of arms, formed where death comes swift and frequently, other companionships seem weak. For men's naked souls are then bared to one another. In this extremest trial that men ever underwent, anywhere and at any time, for any cause, where only the high emotions and the guns are at work, everything else of life is still or pushed out of consciousness.

And men who come together then are for ever inseparable. Already there is many, many a corner of a foreign land that is "for ever England," and presently there will be many a corner of a foreign land that is an American grave also. Those that die and those that live will hereafter so bind our two peoples in mutual understanding that any disturber of that understanding will play but the poor part of a sacrilegious fool.

In comparison with this cementing of the two great branches of our common civilisation how cheap is my poor task or any other man's, and how little worth while your kind and patient hearing! Our common peril and our companionship in staying it have already made us one for ever. I greet you as kinsmen and companions in this great effort to save the world. I shall leave you linked in my memory with the undying recollection of these heroic days which have made our peoples at one for ever in high aims. (Loud cheers.)

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